

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20510

October 8, 2020

The Honorable Sonny Perdue  
Secretary  
United States Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue SW  
Washington, DC 20250

The Honorable Kevin Norton  
Acting Chief  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
United States Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue and Acting Chief Norton,

We write to request the Natural Resources Conservation Service and its Emergency Watershed Protection Program at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) coordinate to the maximum extent possible with the State of Colorado and local governments to help protect water supplies that rely on the Cache la Poudre (Poudre) River.

Communities in Larimer and Weld counties, like Fort Collins and Greeley, receive at least some water supplies from the Poudre River, which pulls water from high mountain reservoirs. There are currently five reservoirs that are highly susceptible to erosion and potential sediment from the Cameron Peak wildfire burning in the area that could impact the larger area's drinking and irrigation water. The Cameron Peak fire has burned over 128,000 acres in Larimer County, directly west of Weld County, and is only 42 percent contained.

Once the fire is more contained, it will be important to work swiftly to mitigate erosion impacts, sediment loading, and debris. In 2012, the High Park fire burned over 80,000 acres in a different part of the Poudre River watershed. The effects of that wildfire caused extreme difficulty for many Northern Colorado communities and water utilities that rely on the Poudre River to provide a clean water supply and irrigation water to highly productive agricultural lands. Fort Collins, Greeley, and other communities anticipate many of the same problems from the Cameron Peak fire that they faced after the 2012 fire, including filtration challenges.

Colorado is managing threats from multiple wildfires across the state. One of the contributors to this wildfire season has been hot and dry weather throughout the spring and summer. The lack of moisture across Colorado has caused system-wide stress on water systems. Working to restore and make any necessary infrastructure repairs to the Poudre River watershed in advance of next spring's snowmelt may well prove to be vital in protecting drinking and irrigation water supplies for communities across Larimer and Weld counties.

We are thankful for the work USDA and other federal agencies have already done to provide support to our communities as they respond to wildfires and long-term issues associated with the fires. We firmly believe we must continue to work together at the federal, state, and local level on wildfire resiliency during and following the fires.

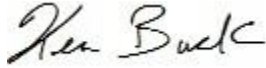
Sincerely,



Cory Gardner  
United States Senator



Joe Neguse  
Member of Congress



Ken Buck  
Member of Congress